

Frequently Asked Questions about the “paper CANS” documents

What is the “paper CANS”?

The “paper CANS” refers to electronic versions of both Massachusetts CANS tools (Birth through Four, and Five through Twenty) that are available for download on the CBHI website: www.mass.gov/masshealth/childbehavioralhealth. The documents are in rich-text format.*

Supporting documentation such as CANS Glossaries may also be downloaded from the same page on the CBHI website.

Does the “paper CANS” include the form titled “Identifying Children with Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED)”?

Yes. We intend always to publish the form used for recording SED determination along with the two versions of the CANS (Birth through Four, and Five through Twenty). The same form will also be built into the Web-based CANS system.

Since EOHHS is developing a Web-based system for entering CANS data, what is the purpose of these “paper CANS” documents? I understand the Web-based CANS system will allow the clinician to print out a hard copy of the completed CANS.

There are three purposes for these documents.

First, until the Web-based CANS system becomes available, providers may use copies of the “paper CANS” to meet the requirement for use of CANS for MassHealth members under age 21.

Second, we anticipate that most providers will continue to complete the CANS on paper as the first step to entering data into the Web-based system, even after it becomes available. For example, clinicians will probably find it convenient to refer to a paper version while conducting a behavioral health assessment, to ensure that they gather all the information needed to complete the CANS. Please note that once the Web-based CANS system is available, providers will be required to enter CANS information into the Web-based system.

Third, the “paper CANS” provides a reference version of the current content of both forms of the Massachusetts CANS. Any revisions of the CANS by EOHHS will be reflected simultaneously in the Web-based CANS system and in the current version of the “paper CANS” that is published on the CBHI website. The existence of a reference

* Rich-text format (.rtf) may be opened in most word-processing programs, including Microsoft Word.

version should be useful to providers in the course of training, quality improvement, design of data systems, and so on.

At the CANS certification training we used a version of the CANS in which the CANS items were printed separately from a one-page “bubble sheet” on which we recorded our scoring of the CANS. We used one bubble sheet for each case vignette. The “paper CANS” versions on your website don’t use a separate bubble sheet. The response to each item is recorded on the same page as the item content. This uses a lot more paper. Why do it this way?

You are correct. In the “paper CANS” format , the response to each item is recorded on the same page as the item content, so the meaning of each response will be immediately apparent to the reader. A “bubble sheet” does not serve as a good communication tool and will not be considered by MassHealth to be adequate documentation of the CANS. Documentation must include all the content that is found in the “paper CANS”, including the form for “Identification of Children with Serious Emotional Disturbance” and the full CANS, including item definitions. Once the Web-based CANS system is available, providers will be able to print out records from the system that they create for the MassHealth member.

I understand the CANS must become part of the medical record. Am I required to keep a filled-out paper copy of the CANS, or may I keep it in electronic form?

All the information recorded in the form titled “Identification of Children with Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED)” and in the CANS must be retained as part of the medical record; this may be either a hard copy or an electronic copy (e.g. a scanned image) of a filled-out “paper CANS”.

May I alter the content of the “paper CANS”?

You are required to preserve faithfully the substance of the documents. This includes the instructions, item content (wording) and item order, for both the “Identification of Children with Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED)” and the CANS, along with CANS copyright information. You may alter the formatting to meet your organization’s standards and unique needs. (We are publishing the “paper CANS” in rich-text format to permit provider customization. For provider convenience we have left space in the header of the “paper CANS” for provider use.)

What happens if EOHHS revises the Massachusetts CANS?

We envision the content of the CANS evolving to some degree over time, as a result of clinical experience with the tool as well as statistical item analysis. We do not anticipate major revisions during the first year. Any revisions of the CANS by EOHHS will be

reflected simultaneously in the Web-based CANS system and in the current version of the “paper CANS” that is published on the CBHI website. While we will actively publicize any updates, it is the responsibility of the provider to check the website periodically to ensure the use of the current version.

I understand that I am required to update the CANS periodically as part of my treatment plan reviews. How do I update a paper version of the CANS? Do I need to print out a blank copy and fill it in?

The periodic update of the CANS involves documentation of any CANS responses (including comment fields) that have changed since the CANS was last done by the same provider organization. It is not necessary to respond to every CANS question all over again.

We will publish a suggested format for this purpose on the CBHI website in the near future.

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